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NSC FOR D. SHAPIRO

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TAGS: [KWBG](#) [MCAP](#) [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [ECON](#) [IS](#)
SUBJECT: ISRAELI HEAD OF CIVIL ADMINISTRATION DISCUSSES
PROGRESS IN THE WEST BANK

Classified By: Ambassador James B. Cunningham for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) SUMMARY: In a June 21 meeting in Bet El, Head of the Civil Administration in Hebron, Brigadier General Yoav "Poli" Mordechai (please protect), told U. S. Security Coordinator (USSC) Chief of Operations and Plans, Colonel Stephen Moniz, that improved security coordination with the Palestinian Security Forces (PASF) as well intelligence operations coordination in Qalqiliya had enhanced Israel's estimation of PA capabilities. NOTE: Moniz obtained an exception to U.S. policy to attend this meeting with the Israeli Civil Administration in the West Bank. END NOTE This increased confidence enabled Israel to free up movement in the West Bank by extending access hours or removing checkpoints, opening cities, allowing Israeli Arabs free access to the West Bank and issuing more permits for Palestinians to travel to Israel. Despite improved coordination through frequent District Coordination Office (DCO) meetings, however, some "mis-coordination" has occurred, which needs to be addressed. Mordechai (please protect) also expressed concerns about basic changes in the Palestinian judicial and prison systems. Mordechai (please protect) proposed holding meetings with USSC at this level on a monthly basis. END SUMMARY.

12. (C) According to Mordechai (please protect), an increased number of arrests means that there will be more intelligence and consequently more efficient operations. He reported that the PASF made 320 arrests of Hamas operatives in Area A (which does not require GOI coordination) in the past six weeks; this compares very favorably to the 40-50 Area A Hamas arrests PASF made in the previous six months. In addition, 230 coordinated operations were conducted outside Area A during these six weeks. Further, COGAT is developing "Measures of Effectiveness."

13. (C) COGAT prefers to work through the PA and not directly with the Palestinian population, as this empowers the PA. As a measure of increased coordination, Mordechai (please protect) noted that there had already been 71 District Coordination Office (DCO) meetings since January, compared to 31 during the entire past year, and brigade commanders meet monthly and are discussing the possibility of joint investigations. Already, the PASF is handing over "lost" Israelis to COGAT, i.e., the PASF is protecting Israeli citizens.

14. (C) There was daily coordination during the Qalqiliya operations, which marked a turning point with regard to the Israeli view of the PASF. Mordechai (please protect) told Moniz, "the Palestinians are willing to die for the cause. We cannot ignore that." He was referring to two recent attempts to arrest five Hamas leaders in Qalqiliya that

resulted in the killing of the five Hamas operatives and the loss of three PASF members.

15. (C) These actions have improved the Israeli assessment of PA capabilities. As a result, Mordechai (please protect) reported that 141 historical checkpoints have been removed (14-15 of these were major checkpoints, he added), and operating hours for remaining checkpoints have been extended to accommodate traffic. Now, a traveler between Hebron and Jenin should expect to encounter no more than two or three random checkpoints along the way. To improve trade and the West Bank economy, Israel has issued 273 VIP cards and over 1000 Business Manager Cards (BMCs), which allow cardholders to cross into Israel without specific prior coordination. In addition, 4,445 Palestinians have been issued overnight permits, allowing them to stay in Israel. The PA decides who should be eligible for any of these permits. All major West Bank cities are open to Palestinians 24/7, so there is no more need for "Closure Permits," and those who had visitor permits but stayed will be issued permanent cards. Further, the PASF may operate 24/7 in nearly all cities (details of restrictions forthcoming). Arab Israelis can travel to the West Bank freely. The relaxations of security measures are permitting trade and dental conferences to be held in the West Bank, and the Palestinian Congress will hold its 6th congress talks in the West Bank, rather than in a third country, for the first time.

16. (C) Despite this substantial progress, areas for improvement in the relationship remain. For example, there have been instances of mis-coordination. PASF has been found operating in Area C without coordination; the Civil Administration has warned the PASF that they will be arrested

if this happens again. Arab Israelis have been arrested by the PASF and either held or brought to trial, while, as Israeli citizens, they should rightly have been turned over to the Israeli authorities. On intelligence sharing, there have been cases in which the PASF (no further information) has not shared details with COGAT, even though COGAT represents the PA in Israeli headquarters and needs this information (no further information). Further, Mordechai (please protect) mentioned a few legal issues that are of concern to him. The PA is closing Hamas-fronted activities, but is not backfilling with PA activities to fulfill these needs. Also, PA intelligence agencies continue to arrest and release some of their suspects. These issues are being addressed in bilateral coordination meetings.

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